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ABSTRACT

This document reports the proceedings of a national conference of government, business, and educational executives on the school-to-work connection. The proceedings provide short summaries of the speeches and discussions held during the conference, which focused on the problems of poorly educated youth--tomorrow's workers--and how businesses and schools can work together to prepare students for the labor force. The following summaries are included: "America Faces a Work Force Crisis" (Elizabeth Dole); "The Role of Business...Is Critical" (Lauro F. Cavazos); "The Need to Link Business and Education" (Steve Gunderson, Dale Parnell, Carroll Campbell); "Facts and Issues" (Marc Tucker, Al Shanker, Ivan Charner); "Seeking Common Ground" (Sue E. Berryman, Frank Doyle, Gerald Hayward, Joshua Smith, James Kadamus); "Formulas for Success" (Kenneth Smith, Larry Brown, Tom Johnson, Gabriel Cortina); and "Ideas and Solutions" (workshop wrap-up). (KC)

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The School-To-Work Connection

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A report on the proceedings of ***"The Quality Connection: Linking Education and Work"*** a national conference sponsored jointly by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education, Washington D. C., May 15-17, 1990.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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U. S. Department of Labor
U. S. Department of Education

"AMERICA FACES A WORK FORCE CRISIS!"

Earlier this year, in Washington D.C., the Secretaries of Labor and Education joined together to sponsor ***"The Quality Connection: Linking Education and Work,"*** *a national conference of corporate CEO's, human resource managers, federal and state officials, school superintendents, educators, training experts and representatives of organized labor.*

This report, drawn from transcripts of Conference proceedings, summarizes the most salient features of the presentations and discussions of that event...so that others throughout the country might benefit in terms of their own plans and deliberations regarding this critical national issue.

Elizabeth Dole
U. S. Secretary of Labor

America faces a work force crisis!

As the demand for workers grows, the number of people who are eligible-- and qualified-- for work diminishes. Too many of today's students are deficient in basic work skills and quite unprepared for the ever-increasing complexity of the jobs in our economy.

For half of America's youth, college is the bridge between school and a career.

But for the non-college bound, the so-called "forgotten youth," the bridge between school and career is, more often than not, unemployment. Business leaders have jobs, but high school grads don't have the skills to fill them.

If connecting with jobs is tough for those who complete high school, it is nearly impossible for those 700,000 young people who drop out each year.

Our work force is growing by only 1% annually— the slowest rate in 40 years. We can't afford this any longer. If America is to succeed in the highly-competitive global marketplace, it is absolutely crucial that we have a skilled quality workforce.

So what can we do? We can— and will— build stronger links between school and work. This must, in fact, become a national priority.

And these are the criteria to guide this collective effort:

- **Stay In School:** School-To-Work programs should motivate youth to stay in school and become productive citizens.
- **High Standards:** School-To-Work programs should continue to push high achievement levels.
- **Link Work And Learning:** School-To-Work programs should link classroom curriculum to work-site experience and learning.
- **Ready To Work:** School-To-Work programs should enhance the participants' prospects for immediate employment after leaving school...on paths that provide significant opportunity for continued education and career development.

One area in which business people can have the greatest impact is mentoring. There's no substitute for one-on-one relationships with successful role models who point out the pitfalls and potholes on the road of life. So I challenge America's industry to allow 10% of its employees the leeway to become involved in some type of mentoring activity for at-risk youth. We have set up mentoring clearinghouses all across America to help local volunteers and businesses to this end.

To define the "new" skills needed for workplace success, I have appointed a blue-ribbon commission of business, labor and education leaders to hammer out national competency guidelines that reflect work readiness. Schools can use these guides to develop relevant curriculum.

I am seeking to refocus the Job Training Partnership Act to target the most economically disadvantaged and least skilled youth— those who are prone to drop out of high school because of lack of basic know-how, homelessness, or teenage pregnancy. Since they need more than job training, we'll also offer basic skills remediation and counseling— a total program that will guide youngsters from school to a lifetime of productive work.

These are things we must do to solve our work force crisis.

"THE ROLE OF BUSINESS...IS CRITICAL!"

Lauro F. Cavazos
U.S. Secretary of Education

The School-To-Work issue has been a concern of government...and business, for that matter...for quite some time. But economic forces, demographic changes and the poor performance of our educational system have brought on a new urgency.

These factors were partly why President Bush, with the nation's Governors, convened last fall's major Education Summit. Out of it came the bold declaration that "...as a Nation we must have an educated workforce *second to none* in order to succeed in an increasingly competitive world economy!"

For too long have we catered mainly to the college-bound, even though 50% of our students end their formal education with graduation from high school. Our new national goals are for *all* Americans. They represent minimum expectations for every citizen, not just those bound for college, in English, History, Math, Science, and in such critical work-readiness skills as Interpersonal Communications, Problem Solving and Teamwork.

Our commitment is to achieve these goals by the year 2000. The role of business in this is critical!

A major objective is to increase the high school graduation rate to 90%. The disproportionately high numbers of Blacks, Native Americans, and Hispanics who never complete high school suggest that the failure is not theirs as much as it is ours. We fail to educate those who need it most, and America is the poorer for it.

By developing clear linkages between classrooms and well-paying employment, we can motivate many more students to stay in school. Showing students earlier-- those in middle or junior high school-- that real job opportunities exist will encourage them to plan more, and pursue appropriate academic programs.

We want to take American students beyond mere competence in Science and Math...and make them first in the world by the year 2000. This will serve our national ability to maintain a technological edge and remain forcefully competitive in the world economy.

Education and work can never again be seen as two separate endeavors. To achieve our goals will require a major commitment from the private sector.

The Need To Link Business And Education

A decline in the number of people to fill our nation's jobs, and widespread concern about our ongoing ability to compete internationally, have caused leaders throughout industry, labor, government and education to turn their attention to the quantity-- and quality-- of our present and future work force.

Steve Gunderson, United States House of Representatives, 3rd District, Wisconsin

Our country's scarcest resource is not capital, not lumber, not metal or iron. It's our kids. Effective utilization of this resource will require a cooperative effort by industry, education, and Federal, State and local government. The question is-- will we put together the educational infrastructure necessary to keep America the leading economic power in the world today?

U.S. students are not only unskilled, they are unmotivated. Students complain about schools, schools complain because they feel business is not supporting them; businesses complain because they do not feel that the education system is doing what is necessary and they see themselves doing more and more to qualify people for work. The nation has a real linkage problem in tying students, the education system, and the work place together.

The infrastructure must not only intervene to keep students from dropping out, but must also make students understand the need to go back to school and continue learning because even honors graduates will become unproductive after 5 to 10 years without continued learning.

We can look around and see what is happening in the world as we begin a decade of preparation for the 21st Century. Society is on the threshold of substantial changes...changes that have significant implications for the education, training, and employment of U.S. workers.

Will we have the infrastructure ready to make that happen in a positive way?

Dale Parnell, President & CEO, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges

Who is going to keep our airplanes flying, our water flowing, our electricity charging, our hospitals operating, our trains tracking? Who is going to do it?

Our education system has allowed only one standard of achievement— the college-prep baccalaureate degree program— to predominate. And our money follows our priorities; we spend twice as much on individuals on the college/university path as we do on the rest of society, yet only 20% of our adults have baccalaureate degrees or higher. While all this money is going to colleges and universities, our national high school drop-out rate is as bad today as it was 20 years ago.

In a society as diverse and egalitarian as ours, one definition of academic fulfillment will not do.

If we want to cut the dropout rate, we must help students understand *why* they are learning the particular subject matter they are studying. People can withstand almost anything— if they know why! Educators must help students understand the future, the impact of technology...and help them deal with it.

We must think more about *applied* academics programs. We do a disservice to too many people by starting so much instruction with the theoretical and then moving to the concrete; we should be moving students the other way, from the concrete to the theoretical.

Technicians hold our lives in their hands. We want them to really know their stuff the way we want our physicians to know what they are doing. By 1995, 75% of all job classifications will require some form of post-secondary education and training. Business leaders must sit down with high schools and community colleges to design curricula

thatdirectly connect to the real world of work.

A tech-prep "Associate Degree" program consisting of a coordinated curriculum for grades 11, 12, 13 and 14 that parallels the four year baccalaureate degree program offers tremendous potential for the future technological society. Such a degree program will become an important credential in our society for nurses, laser technicians, police officers, marketing specialists and such.

Another challenge for educators and employers is to convince people that they will be involved in life-time learning. New partnerships between high schools, community colleges and the business community are necessary to provide the type of life-time learning required.

The number of students enrolled in the General Education track is a matter for concern. The figure grew from 12% in 1968 to 42% in 1980, yet *The Nation At Risk* report described the General Education track as "...a program that does not prepare students for work and does not prepare them for college." Two-thirds of our drop-outs come from the general track.

Education is disconnected from the world of work and from the real world in general. We have allowed too broad a difference between our scholars and our workers. If this continues, the U.S. will find itself in serious trouble.

Carroll Campbell, Governor, State of South Carolina, Co-Chair: National Governors Association Education Task Force

Not too many years ago our economy had room for unskilled workers. Now, however, the demand for workers who are prepared to work and can think on their feet and learn on the job is increasing daily. Our education system desperately needs help in meeting that need.

Today we lose kids in the sophomore and junior years because they don't relate to what we offer— a core curriculum for college; we don't have alternatives, and they don't go out ready for work. We must run on more than one track when we educate our kids.

We must improve the programs in every school system in this country.

We must ask businesses what skills they need and provide incentives to educators to deliver students who fill these needs.

Heretofore the emphasis has always been on input...how much money did we spend?...who got it?...what kinds of programs did we buy? Never did we ask what we got for it. Any business that played it that way would be broke in a year! So we must look at what's coming out, and hold everyone, including the governors, and the President, accountable for the the actual achievement of our students.

This country must view education as a lifelong enterprise. Most of us will change jobs about seven times throughout our lifetimes, but the system isn't set up to help working Americans upgrade and change skills easily. It's the only way we will be able to compete globally.

By the year 2000 every major American business will be involved in strengthening the connection between education and work. We *must* have these partnerships. We won't succeed in making an effective School-To-Work transition until business is an equal partner at the table with educators and parents.

Right now, to a very large extent, business is still the missing link.

Facts And Issues

Other countries provide their youth with far more assistance in making the transition from school to work than does the United States. The first Conference panel compared international attitudes and approaches to educating and training young people.

Marc Tucker, Professor of Education, University of Rochester/ President, National Center on Education and the Economy.

There are important differences between U.S. attitudes toward training and thosee in several industrialized European and Asian nations.

In other industrialized countries there is a broad consensus that education and skills development are the keys to high wages and full employment—vitally important national goals. In these countries major decisions about education are made with other social partners (employers, labor, government) at the table. These countries are more willing to invest in children.

Historically, the U.S. has been the leading advocate of the Taylorist view of organizing work — in which 30% of the population (college grads) directs the work of the uneducated and unskilled 70%. But this is a formula for disaster in the current international economy.

The U.S. system for transitioning from school-to-work is the worst in the industrialized world. Central European countries feature a three-year period when the schools and the business community take joint responsibility for the majority of children. Young people come out of these systems with a solid basic education *and* first-rate job skills. The lesson for the U.S. is that the prize will go to countries which abandon the Taylorist model, make the most efficient use of highly educated and skilled workers, and develop a comprehensive human resource policy.

Al Shanker: President, American Federation of Teachers

The problem of work readiness is not confined to at-risk youth; results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress show necessary skills lacking among a large portion of our youth. 96% of our graduating students could not calculate simple two-step math problems that involved interest rates. Most of those admitted to colleges and universities in the U.S. probably would not be admitted to colleges anywhere else in the industrialized world. Our system has incentives that move people in the wrong direction. While most other countries have stringent national standards for getting into college, we tell students: "Don't worry, there's a college somewhere in the U.S. that will take you."

Let's provide students with incentives for performing well in school.

In practically all other industrialized countries, how one does in school has some relationship to what job one gets. But in the U.S., high school grades are not considered by firms when hiring. Many companies simply do not hire 18-year olds. According to one corporate official, "we wait until they're 24 or 25 and we've seen how they've done elsewhere." As a society, we pay a terrible price for not providing students with an immediate incentive to do well in school. In Germany, students can contrast the jobs obtained by poor school performance with the better-paying positions secured by good performance. This provides immediate and easily understood incentives for the student. In the U.S., the lesson is that it doesn't matter whether or not you work hard.

What would happen if McDonald's said: "Before we hire you, bring in your transcript, a letter of recommendation from your teacher and a statement that you can spare 10 or 15 hours a week without affecting your school work?"

We should also consider different approaches to learning: At McMasters Medical School in Ontario, for instance, there are no classes. Students enter and form teams of six; they begin meeting patients (usually simulated) and spend the next three or four years working

together trying to figure out what is wrong with the patients. It's problem-based learning, rather than the usual discipline-based approach. Evaluations indicate that students trained this way are outperforming medical students trained in the traditional method.

Ivan Charner, Director, National Institute for Work and Learning/ Academy for Educational Development

We're very close to a human capital crisis. While the U.S. is struggling to keep pace with foreign competition, our young people can't get jobs requiring high skill levels, and are settling, instead, into low skill jobs. Part of the problem is a societal failure to prepare young people for a changing world. Those who complete college, about 25% of our young people, see promising employment prospects. But the rest, ten to 20 million young workers, face limited prospects of long-term productive employment, and limited opportunities for life-long learning.

A recent ASTD study listed the basic skills needed by today's workers:

- Learning to learn
- Reading
- Writing and computation
- Communication
- Problem-solving, creativethinking
- Personal management and goal-setting
- Self-esteem
- Teamwork
- Leadership

We must rethink the issue of working while in school. Between 40% and 60% of all high school students work part time— with no connection between learning and their work experience. We should capitalize on students' desire or need to work by designing school programs which help them get more out of their part-time employment, make wise occupational choices, and obtain appropriate training.

These should, at a minimum:

- Establish a centralized location for training and employment-related activities.
- Provide information on future employment and career options.
- Oversee the current work experiences of students.
- Maintain relations with employers in the community and link work with academic subjects.
- Provide resume development, interviewing skills, and career counseling.
- Connect students with adults through mentoring and other kinds of programs.

The role of employers would be critical in such a system. They'd provide a "structure of opportunity," including entry level jobs, functional training and workplace literacy training, and opportunities for further education and training. Employers must work with schools:

- To show that grades are linked to employment success.
- To ensure that students do not work excessive hours.
- To provide mentors for students.
- To connect work with school subjects.
- To help students understand the nature of the workplace.

Seeking Common Ground

Business and education must get together and agree on the desired outcomes of the education process... and must work together to create the systems which facilitate these expectations most effectively.

Sue E. Berryman, Director of the Institute on Education and the Economy, Teachers College, Columbia University

Learning and working are not separate activities. Cognitive science research clearly shows that effective learning is active construction on the part of the learner; learning involves doing. Intelligence and expertise are built out of interaction with the environment, not in isolation from it.

Research reveals common mistakes in education:

- Skills are not like building blocks; individuals do not have to learn the basics before they learn specific technical or problem-solving skills.
- The learner is not a blank slate as is commonly supposed. The traditional curriculum ignores what is already in the student's head.
- Education often has an inappropriate image of the learner as a passive receptacle — and of learning as the process of simply pouring knowlege into the brain of the learner.
- Skills are often taught in isolation from practical experience with the result that surprisingly few theoretical principles are transferred to practice.
- Separating learning-to-know and learning-to-do is dysfunctional.
- Knowledge and skills are often taught in settings that do not simulate those in which the work must be performed, i.e. the teaching occurs out of context.

What gets taught in the schools is determined by what is measured. Today's educational assessments are obscure, opaque and really inaccessible; they assess competence in terms of what schools and textbooks define as important. They do not measure how well students can perform activities that have meaning in the non-school world.

The consequences of opaque assessments are profound. Instead of serving as signals that can coordinate the decisions of teachers, school administrators, parents, students, employers, and the polity, they simply mirror the disjunctive world of education. The effort to improve the school-to-work transition should target assessments which operate as a clear signaling system to help us bring the outcomes of the educational process and the skills and knowledge needs of the workplace into line.

Frank Doyle, Senior Vice President for Corporate Relations, General Electric Company

The social role of corporations is to run competitive enterprises. When the performance of the education system begins to impinge on corporations' ability to compete, then business must become concerned and involved.

In the 1960s and 1970s, capital investment drove the productivity of this nation and its competitive advantage. In the 1980s, U.S. business sought competitive advantage by rigorously cutting out waste.

Now capital moves wherever capital wants to go; information and technological advantages evaporate very quickly; and there are limits to how much waste can be eliminated. The only potential source of competitive advantage left is in producing high value-added work; to perform high value-added work, you need value-adding workers. This fact, and the demographic changes occurring in our workforce, add up to an enormous shortage of well-educated, autonomous workers who are able to add value on their own.

This shortage will create tremendous pressures on public education systems and, on the internal education systems of corporations to satisfy a need for better-educated, verbally and technically literate graduates and workers. New workers will require work that allows them to grow, places to learn, and the best learning and working technology available. We cannot carry the social burden of a large segment of

our workforce that is not educationally qualified to work and remain globally competitive.

So business must get more involved and must let education know about the work that needs to be done. Business knows that running competitive enterprises cannot be done unless the broad issue of education reform is addressed.

Gerald Hayward, Deputy Director, National Center for Research and Vocational Education

If one had the luxury of inventing an educational delivery system, responsive to both change and the needs of the business community, the present system would definitely not be it.

The existing system has too many barriers to responsiveness:

- A multi-layered bureaucracy comprised of the federal sector, regions, states, districts, departments, and the classroom.
- A highly decentralized delivery system.
- The extraordinary organizational diversity and complexity within educational institutions (for example, California has 80 programs dealing with vocational, technical, and occupational education and training).
- The lack of a holistic, comprehensive view of how this all fits (we have a terrible proclivity in education to blame one another for our problems).
- The lack of an appropriate, coherent incentive system.

Voc-Ed must become more responsive to business; this will require a massive and sustained effort. In spite of all the barriers, there is promise and proof that it can be done. A small but rapidly growing number of high schools and community colleges are beginning to adopt curriculum changes which blur the dysfunctional distinction between academic and vocational education.

Given the increasing complexity of the world of work and current knowledge of how people learn, it makes sense to strengthen the academic content of vocational courses and infuse academic curriculum with practical, work-related examples.

More and more alternative high schools and community colleges have changed curriculum or totally restructured their processes to implement this merging of the academic and vocational aspects of education. Another promising development is the rapidly growing number of successful tech-prep programs that are operating. The best of these involve employers at the outset and at every subsequent stage. They offer summer internships, work experience opportunities, mentoring opportunities, teacher/employee exchanges, equipment, and placement guarantees.

We must search for true partnerships, not quick-fix, adopt-a-school approaches.

Joshua Smith, CEO, Maxima Corporation

This country cannot be competitive with the growing underclass that exists today — a virtual third world within our boundaries. We spend billions of dollars on programs to maintain this segment of the population. We have an albatross around our necks and cannot run the race or move forward until we address the needs of this segment of our population. The bureaucratic approach will not work. We must try the entrepreneurial approach. The problem will not wait for the year 2000. It is here now and is growing.

The entrepreneurial spirit, if truly embraced by those concerned with this issue, could provide a direction, an inspiration, and motivation to overcome the bureaucratic obstacles that block the path to real change. Business must be part of this process; minorities and the disadvantaged must also become more involved.

We should not solidify a bureaucracy. People do not follow programs, they follow success. They are looking for futures. When a salesman talks and the prospective client listens, there is no sale. To make sales, a salesman must talk until the client begins to talk; then, listen. People buy products, but first they buy the person selling the product.

We need a stronger minority business segment in this society, in our neighborhoods, finding and training people as part of the community structure. The "old-boy" network in this country is not as strong as it used to be. More and more, we are finding that decisions are being made by women and minorities. This development gives us hope because we cannot be strong as a country unless we have healthy communities across the board.

Racism is dumb, expensive and helps absolutely no one. As a nation, we must move beyond identifying this as a black problem, or a minority problem, or a neighborhood problem. It is America's problem and it can be solved not by adding more layers of bureaucracy, but by applying the entrepreneurial spirit that got us to where we are today. Creative efforts are needed to ensure that the undereducated, unskilled, disadvantaged and minorities are included.

James Kadamus, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Higher and Continuing Education, New York

A paradigm is a set of assumptions that help us explain the world and predict people's behavior, a set of rules that describe boundaries and tell what to do to be successful within those boundaries. When society operates within the boundaries of a particular paradigm, "inside the box," it is difficult to create any other paradigm. Einstein once said, "significant problems cannot be solved

at the same level of thinking with which we created them."

The traditional educational paradigm sees school as a highly structured place where learning occurs, a classroom with a teacher up front. Work is a place where products are made, services provided, and information exchanged. Both circumstances are highly structured and driven by individual competitiveness.

However, current research has revealed that work has become increasingly complex, is increasingly done in groups, requires individuals who are self-managed and able to solve problems and make decisions.

Work is moving to a new training paradigm, while schools tend to stick with the old model.

IBM, for example, is in the process of creating a customized, conceptualized, just-in-time learning system for its workforce, using computer software called Courseware. It has designed a worldwide learning system that can be immediately accessed through computer terminals. On any given day, IBM has 22,000 employees engaged in classroom training...a true merging of work and learning.

The best of academic education often incorporates these same concepts. The best teachers contextualize learning, i.e. make it real. The best vocational education has always tried to connect work and learning, blur the distinctions and create the opportunities for students to learn more through a working situation. Apprenticeship programs also attempt to blur the distinctions between work and learning.

We must create a new paradigm for school, one that will blur the distinctions between work and learning...one that will have validity for individuals preparing to enter the workforce, and equal validity for those already in the workforce.

Formulas For Success

There are already many programs in existence which have successfully assisted youth in making the school-to-work connection. These can serve us well as models of what can be done elsewhere throughout the nation.

Kenneth Smith, CEO, International Management Development Group

There are many ways to the "Promised Land" of School-To-Work transitions. The 12-year old Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program, is one. By this fall, JAG will be operating in 18 States with about 21,000 at-risk youth in 300 high schools. JAG works with individual states in the creation of statewide school-to-work transition systems which focus on the most at-risk young people.

JAG's National Board of Directors includes business people, labor leaders, governors, educators, and community leaders. The organization operates at the state level by creating nonprofit entities which "pull the pieces together" and hire the job specialists who take personal responsibility for about 40 at-risk youth. These job specialists work directly in high schools to motivate students to stay in the program. They maintain contact with youngsters for a full nine months after they leave school to ensure that they get "quality" jobs, not just jobs.

The results of JAG's interventions are very exciting. The lesson is that modest interventions — $1,000 a student is JAG's cost — make a very big difference in outcomes, even if the intervention occurs as late as the twelfth grade.

Eight elements can serve as formulas for success in youth training:

- Find the right people to take responsibility for the school-to-work transition, train them well and 95% of the goal has been accomplished.
- Make one person responsible for the transition; that person must get the youngster through school successfully and placed in a job.
- It takes everybody to make it work—the business community, the JTPA system, labor unions, and community leaders.
- The job gets done one kid at a time.
- Sustain whatever approach is being implemented; it takes several years to have a real impact.
- Set performance requirements and hold people to them.
- The program must provide a very critical vehicle of motivation for these young people.
- The effort must provide real incentives for success to incorporate in any new approach to the school-to-work issue. America got to where it is because somebody figured out that if people are given incentives for more success, more productivity and more performance, they will do better.

Larry Brown, President, 70001 Training and Employment Institute

Choose simple solutions to the school-to-work transition problem. Focus on process, design, delivery, organizational relationships, and stucture rather than program content.

The simplest design is creative anarchy; 70001 is experimenting with this concept in 54 school systems throughout the country. The idea is to get teachers to just let go of control in their classrooms in order to pull students into the process of developing class content. The experience is that, after two or three weeks, during which time chaos reigns, a new order of relationships begins forming. Youngsters start taking responsibility for what they are doing, and teachers take on new roles. The goal is to alter relationships. Content will be filled in later.

Instead of spending time looking for magic bullets, successful programs, and content, we should invest in our people. Change the blue collar working conditions of teachers. The school room should reflect the workplace (work does not operate over a nine-month period or for a six-hour school day).

One of the programs being tested by 70001 requires teachers to be out of the classroom 22 days a year in order to introduce them to the world of work. Teachers see first-hand what happens in the work world.

While it would be hard to transfer program design and content from Europe

to the U.S., this country can learn compassion, commitment, concern and esteem for human services professionals from the Europeans. Diversity must prevail in the learning environment just as diversity in the work world prevails. Let the boundaries between school and work fall. Put classes in businesses and business in classes.

A simple message should be sent to teacher colleges and textbook companies: "We will no longer accept what you are producing." Henceforth, textbooks should reflect the world of work.

An open-entry/open-exit school system should be created. We are halfway there— ours is an open-exit system (i.e., high dropout rate).

One of the most successful dropout recovery programs occurred in Chicago when the principal wrote letters to 500 dropouts and asked them to come back to school. Four hundred came back.

A most crucial move in identifying successful School-To-Work program elements is to ask the customers. Business and kids will be quick to say whether a program will work or not.

Tom Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Adult and Alternative Education, Hacienda La Puente Unified School District, Los Angeles, California

California's Partnership Academies are career-oriented schools within schools, established as voluntary partnerships among the school district, local employers and the Department of Education. Student participation is voluntary and requires parental permission. Students take one technical and three academic classes, and are provided mentors from the employing firm. The work experience component occurs in the last half of the twelfth grade.

The single greatest strategy for keeping or bringing young Americans into the labor force is a stipend, subsidized employment, a job hooking them on paychecks. The real success stories mostly involve getting young people on a paycheck and keeping them there.

California's Department of Education defines School-To-Work as a "...purposeful, organized, outcome-oriented process designed to help at-risk students move from school to employment and a quality adult life. Expected student outcomes include meaningful employment, further education, participation in the community, social activities, recreational activities, and on-going educational opportunities."

The foundation of a successful transition is to provide job opportunities for students, along with the skills needed for successful involvement in employment and adult life. The foundation is laid as soon as special needs are identified, and the process continues until the student completes movement from school to work and the adult life.

The transition process (which begins by 9th grade) involves the student, the family, key education officials, adult service workers, and other providers. All work together to assess needs, and plan and implement education, training and other activities.

While the greatest single strategy for helping youth to make the school-to-work transition is finding them employment, the most neglected strategy is the effective use of assessment. What's needed is a comprehensive, laboratory-based system that tests and evaluates skills acquisition through the use of multiple instruments. Assessment should precede training; academic instruction and training need to be concurrent.

This country is caught up with the concept that everyone should be a college graduate; it is, after all, the career path that teachers understand. Our greatest disability is that educators are career illiterate. A survey revealed that teachers did not know what it took to be a nurse, an architect, a pharmacist or a mortician. Teachers need to know more about the actual world of work.

Gabriel Cortina, Associate Superintendent, Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles, California

LA's Concurrent Program is an adult education program which operates 12 job training centers in Los Angeles, augmented by 29 adult schools and 700 worksites.

Originally, the system functioned independently from the traditional system. Now the two systems are interrelated to allow the student free access to both the traditional and alternative education delivery systems throughout the four-year high school period.

The program is structured on the premise that there will be no tracking of students. Students, their families, and any other providers of guidance will be able to reach out through any of the options offered. The in-school option is a traditional high school with six periods. Outside the high school, an alternative delivery system has been developed through the adult education, job training, and the State and Federal literacy programs. These alternative programs are open-entry/open-exit, and use teachers from business and industry.

The program is not compelled to run on the traditional school calendar. The schools can be open all year long and for 24 hours a day. Flexibility in the credentialing of teachers allows employees of the involved business enterprises to impart skills and knowledge to the participants.

Under the Concurrent Program, a

student approaching graduation from the traditional high school who realizes that he or she is not going to graduate could, instead of dropping out, switch to the alternative program.

Under State law, students must attend a four-period, minimum-day program on a high school campus for academic courses. After meeting this requirement, an individual can then also participate in any of the alternative education options that exist on any other campus.

One option, with about 12,000 students participating, involves transporting the students to a business-industry site for instruction by credentialed private sector employees. One employer reported that 80% of the students who participate in the program at his firm end up as employees.

Workforce LA is a private sector program dedicated to helping educators redesign the curriculum.

Ideas And Solutions

At the May Conference, attendees participated in group discussions concerning five key School-To-Work issues. These are some of the comments and suggestions that came from that workshop session.

How can business involvement in the education-work connection be strengthened?

• Attitudinal change must precede structural change. Business must recognize its role as a player in the education system, and educators need to relax control of the educational process to allow for fuller participation by business.

• Educators need to engage in some outreach "marketing" to ensure that business is made aware of alternative School-To-Work programs being developed within the school districts.

• Both groups must be sold on the idea that the partnership is of mutual benefit.

• Business must become involved in educational decision-making through powerful coalitions which exert influence on the schools directly, by demanding different outcomes...and indirectly, by having an impact on education legislation and policy.

• Incentives for staying in school and for doing well in school should be jointly developed by the business-education partnership.

• Firms should develop hiring criteria that take academic performance into account and the fact that performance will be a critical factor in job selection must be communicated to the schools and to students.

• An agreement on expected basic skills outcomes must be developed; industry groups should determine the feasibility of developing industry-specific standards for performance in individual occupations.

• Teachers should spend a two-year apprenticeship in business to develop better understandings of workplace needs and improve the communication between the business and education communities. Teacher exposure to the work world during breaks and holidays should be encouraged.

• Business and education have a difficult time communicating with one another; their different cultures, different vocabularies, and different ways of defining and measuring success create obstacles. A glossary of terms may be a first step in enhancing the communication and understanding between the two parties.

• Some type of "exchange network" is needed to help schools know what to ask for and to help businesses to understand what they have to offer and how they can assist most effectively. Some sort of institutional framework or non-profit organization may be a means of bringing partners together.

How can school-to-work programs assure work-bound youth a range of choices?

• Needed: an overriding plan or strategic vision which outlines a future direction for the school-to-work program.

• A *comprehensive* partnership is needed with strong involvement from local social services providers, businesses, teachers, teacher educators, students and parents.

• Parents have a critical role in promoting the School-To-Work connection. They must be included in the process in the early years of their children's education and must be informed of the range of opportunities in career development for their children.

• Students must have a better understanding of how the labor market functions, and what is valued in the workplace. Since more responsibility is delegated to line workers, all students (not just specific parts of the school population) must have opportunities to learn how to participate effectively in teams and develop interpersonal communication skills.

• We must change the perception of non-college curriculum. By eliminating the differences between academic and vocational education, *qualification* would become the overriding outcome and workplace learning would apply to all kids, both college and non-college bound.

• Career ladder options (to the very top) should be provided for both non-college bound and college bound youth.

• Guidance counselors, students and parents must have reliable labor market information about job availabilities and what education and training skills are required for entry-level positions.

• Awareness of career development should be given at an early age, long before high school, so that kids develop positive perceptions that education leads to better careers.

• Don't add more courses to the curriculum; instead— innovate...and provide relevance between existing course work and real world employment possibilities.

• A *long-term* commitment to the School-To-Work concept is a must. It will take considerable time, effort and coordination of many players to develop successful routes that guide youth to meaningful careers; members of partnerships must be assured that the national and local communities are committed to a long-term endeavor to change the current environment.

How should work-connected learning relate to the educational setting?

• European models of apprenticeship have positive aspects for the education-work connection, particularly in terms of establishing relevancy of learning and applying what is learned. However, concern must be given to the matter of developing too rigid a system that impedes opportunities.

• The "general education" track that exists in high schools produces most of today's dropouts; these students are not sufficiently stimulated. The general studies category does not establish sufficient goals for those who do graduate from high school.

• Establish high expectations of academic achievement for all students and communicate these. Non-college-bound youth need to know that employers expect as high a level of accomplishment from them as from college-bound youth.

• High schools should provide a range of applied learning opportunities in some generic business skills, such as communication skills.

• The educational community must pursue a fundamental restructuring of the education system to incorporate more creative changes. Question the traditional approach... even to the point of considering doing away with high schools as we know them today.

• The educational system should be *competency*-based, not time-based. Make clear what competencies the student has achieved when he/she is graduated from high school. The credentialing system should be consistent, on a national basis, for specific occupations in order to promote employer confidence in skill attainments.

• Communities should invest in teachers by providing external exposure to work applications in their academic fields.

• Teachers should be given more autonomy to develop school curriculum. They should make changes, assume responsibility for their teaching curriculum, and be rewarded for their contribution in linking classroom learning to workplace skill requirements and to career building.

What are the key characteristics of school-to-work transition program models?

• We need to agree on national expectations of the general education basics...and establish specific standards for performance in individual industries and occupations.

• We need an ongoing structure that brings together educators and industry representatives to establishing standards of competency and credentialing. As technological advances occur, the standards could be constantly updated by this coalition to reflect the changing industry requirements.

• Good school-to-work transition program models revolve around strong and active partnerships that give responsibility and provide benefits or incentives to each party.

• Contracts and commitments by learners are important parts of any program; students need to know the options, make decisions and be held accountable for their decisions, but always with the option of changing routes.

• Benchmarks for student/employee performance are essential to measure the quality of the program.

• School work should be directly related to skill requirements expressed by employers. It should be individualized to the extent possible, allowing students to progress at their own pace, and be competency-based, offering credentials for skills attained.

• Jobs (and wage levels) must be made more attractive than welfare. Students need incentives to make completing a program worthwhile.

• The school-to-work efforts must be initiated, developed, and operated at local levels. The role of the federal government should only be to provide leadership and a sense of direction.

How can accountability be built into school-to-work transition efforts?

• Accountability must apply to the system as well as the individual. Competency-based instruction fosters accountability for teachers and students.

• Industry must design incentives for staying in school *and* reward those who possess the required skills and perform well on the job.

• Students should evaluate the extent to which business utilizes the skills they developed in school and rewards them for their skill attainments.

• Students should report back to teachers how well the education system served them once they began working.

• While students need alternative career paths, they also need to be accountable for their choices. Somehow, students should not have the option of doing nothing.

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